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SOURCE Akhir Sa'ah

MISTREATMENT OF USSR MOSLEMS REVEALED BY SOVIET PILGRIMS

Soviet Moslems making the pilgrimage to Mecca this year reported the following:

1. For 20 years prior to 1945, Moslems in the USSR had not been permitted to make the pilgrimage. In 1945, they were permitted to do so for the first time.

In 1947, the government broke its promise to permit pilgrimage on the pretext of the cholera epidemic in Egypt at that time; instead, the Soviet authorities permitted a convention at Tashkent and called in the "Moslem Congress." They said that it took the place of the pilgrimage.

In 1950, the president of the Moslem Congress [not to be confused with the above] held in Karachi sent a note of protest to the Soviet government for forbidding its Moslem nationals to make the pilgrimage.

2. Pravda Vostoka [Tashkent daily newspaper] once wrote, "The custom of fasting for 30 days in Ramadan [Moslem holy month] comes at a critical time, the best time for planting cotton; and this fasting results in a smaller cotton crop."

3. The government forbade writing in the Arabic language and prohibited Moslem offices from functioning; the Qur'an has become a smuggled book, hidden by Moslems from the eyes of the police.

4. The Mullas [religious leaders] were taxed so heavily, they disappeared from the scene, and their places were taken by nonreligious men.

5. Moslem organizations in the Moslem republics in Turkistan, the Crimea, and the Caucasus were dissolved because they were accused of collaborating with the Germans during World War II. Thousands from the Tartar areas were exiled to the Volga region and others, to Siberia.

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6. The 1917 proclamation by Lenin and Stalin guaranteeing religious freedom for the Moslems was not adhered to. Moslem leaders were later accused of treason, tried, and sent to Siberia. In 1936, Fakhr-ad-Din, Mufti of the Tartars, had to face a court which wanted him to confess to acts which he did not commit. When he refused, he was executed.

7. Mosques have been converted into convention and lecture halls; others have been converted into stores.

8. Prior to 1941, Soviet Moslems had to worship secretly. In that year, the government permitted public worship. A little later, however, this right was withdrawn and any pious person was considered a heretic by the authorities.

9. Stalin's promise not to violate the Shari'a [Moslem canon laws] and to respect Moslem religious courts was completely broken.

10. A purge took place in the Moslem areas. Mir Sayyid Sultan Ghalif [approximation from Arabic] was accused of trying to establish a Moslem state and of being a follower of Trotsky. As a result, a number of Moslems were arrested and later executed.

11. All these persecutions only served to strengthen the Moslems' attachment to their religion and to convince them that it is better for them to die as Moslems than to live as atheists.

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